

# How the Match Gets Made?

## Exploring Student-Teacher Placements Across Teacher Education Programs, Districts & Schools

Elise St. John, Dan Goldhaber, & RoddyTheobald, American Institutes for Research • John Krieg, Western Washington University

### Study Context

- Student-teaching internships most important component of teacher training (NCATE, 2010)
- 200,000 student-teaching assignments/yr. nationally (Greenberg et al., 2011)
- Aspects of student-teacher placements predictive of future teacher...
  - Effectiveness (Ronfeldt, 2015, Goldhaber et al., 2017)
  - Retention rates (Ronfeldt, 2012)
  - Evaluation ratings (Ronfeldt et al., in press)
- However, very limited research on student-teacher placements

### Research Questions

1. How do teacher education programs (TEPs), districts & schools work together to match student-teachers with mentor teachers?
2. What factors influence these decisions & how do practices vary?

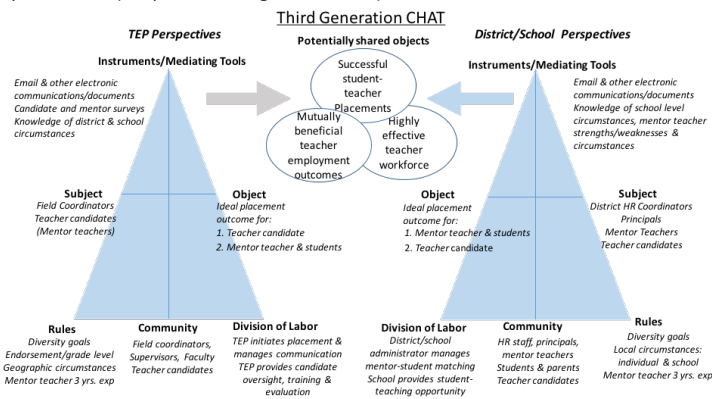
### Methodology & Sampling Strategy

- Qualitative case study analysis
- Semi-structured interviews with 17 educators across 8 TEPs, 2 districts, and 6 schools situated across 6 counties in WA state

TEPs				
Control	Public (4)		Private (4)	
Type	Doctoral University (3)		MA colleges & Universities (5)	
Region	North (2)	South (0)	East (1)	West (5)
Districts				
Centralization	Centralized (2)		Decentralized (3)	
Region	North (2)	South (0)	East (0)	West (3)
Schools				
Achievement level	High (3)		Low (3)	
Region	North (2)	South (0)	East (0)	West (3)

### Conceptual Framework: CHAT & Social Capital Theory

Third generation activity system: TEP educators negotiating with district/school educators & teacher candidates for a common object of activity: Student-teacher placements (adapted from Engestrom, 2001)



### Social Capital Theory

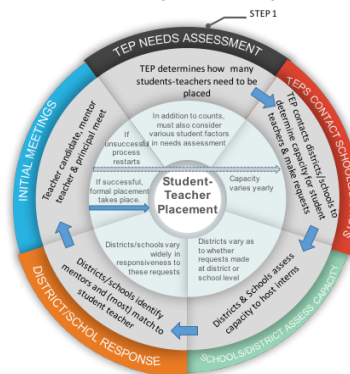
- Capital derived from one's location in social network (Lin, 2001)
- Social capital resources provide information & influence to people within networks: benefits of timing, access & referrals (Burt, 1992; Granovetter, 1995).
- Others peripheral/outside network may be excluded (Portes, 1998)

### Selected Findings

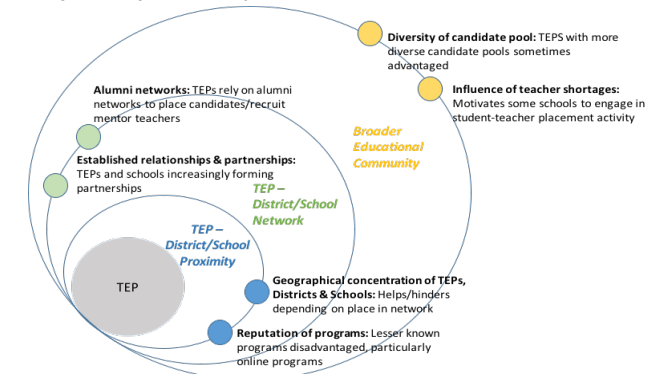
#### Sources of agreement across TEPs, districts & schools:

- Widespread concern about need to diversify teacher workforce influencing practices
  - "So, recently, I have been saying, 'if you have students of color that need placements, we will find a way. If you don't, then we're full, for right now.'" Principal
  - "One of the other important goals for our program is to increase the diversity of the teaching core because the majority of teachers in title one schools are not reflective of the students that they're teaching." TEP coordinator
- Current divisions in labor/communication leave questions about student-teacher/mentor-teacher matching process
  - "District protocols are terribly opaque in this. I don't know what districts do behind the scenes. This is a point of breakdown in the process. I assume that principals are giving their thumbs up, but I don't know that for certain." TEP coordinator
  - "If there aren't any parameters per se, like they need to be in the south end of the district or they need to be in a school with a high ELL population, I will just look at my list and say, 'Oh, I need to place a student in a 3rd grade classroom. Here's all the 3rd grade teachers'" and I just kind of start going through the list somewhat in alphabetical order...I try to find a balance but not having worked in a classroom myself I don't know. I just make the best choices I can based on the information that I have." District HR Coordinator
- Teacher shortages influencing district/school engagement in process & motivating creative hiring strategies
  - "I know we have a shortage of special education teachers, so yeah, I think there is much more interest in having interns so that we can hire them." Principal
  - "I think the teacher shortage is definitely changing the landscape of placement. I think those superintendents that are feeling the fire of not being able to fill all their positions byfall are starting to tap us on the shoulder and say, 'how can we better strengthen our partnership?'" TEP coordinator
  - "It will try to place people in that endorsement for student teachers in [their] building the year before those retirements happen." TEP coordinator

#### Student-teacher placement process:



#### TEP forms of Social Capital in Student-Teacher Placements:



#### Sources of variation across TEPs, districts & schools:

- Variation in TEP philosophy with regard to diversifying candidate experience
  - "Part of our charge is to make sure we give people placements that we would call diverse placements. Somebody who grew up in small town Washington we might want to consider giving them a placement that's more urban, to give them just a very different experience than they know." TEP Coordinator
  - "I think it needs to be a match for the student. It's really at what place are they gonna feel comfortable? If they grew up in a district that maybe was not socially-economically diverse, or racially diverse, and they aren't gonna feel comfortable in that setting, it might be better for them to start in a setting that is not that diverse, so they can practice their pedagogy and then maybe move into a more diverse setting." TEP Coordinator
- Variation in mentor-teacher selection practices and priorities
  - "I select people who a) know good teaching practice, and b) also would be a good mentor for someone. But then I also think about who would benefit from having an intern in terms of will it push them to grow as a result, too? Maybe they are stagnant or they need something different to switch up their own practice, too." Principal
  - "Is the mentor teacher going to provide a good model? If we are going to take on the responsibility of teaching our next generation of educators, we better be doing it well." Principal